

Joachim Brudzinski, Minister of the Interior and Administration, Poland
Michal Kurtyka, President of COP24 and Vice-Minister of Environment, Poland
General Tomasz Praga, Head of the Board Guard, Poland
Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

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Statement by the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership on the refusal to admit civil society activists to Poland to attend the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change in Katowice, Poland

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society (EaP CSF) Steering Committee strongly condemns the refusal by Poland's Border Guard (SG) to admit members of non-governmental organisations, planning to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice. This example of absurd discrimination of activists from environmental movements – concerned about the negative effects on our planet, from a major conference damages Poland's credibility as a country, which is serious about facing the challenges brought by global warming.

The excuse used by the Polish officials in relation to the ban on attendance, and deportation of those denied entry to Poland, is that they posed a threat to “public safety and order” seems scarcely credible – and signals that, in this case at least, the Polish authorities have lost the ability to adequately assess the security risks the country faces.

We note that Nugzar Kokhraidze, from the “Dialogue of Generations” Organisation in Georgia, who was a member of the official Georgian delegation to the Conference – and who is a member of EaP CSF, had a visa support letter from the organisers of COP24 and was not only denied entry to Poland at Katowice airport, but has also been threatened with deportation.

In all, according to the press reports, people from Belgium, Germany, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine have been denied entry to Poland on the same grounds. Polish citizens travelling to Katowice to take part in a demonstration in support of policies to stop climate change have also been harassed during their journey.

We demand an explanation from the Minister, and ask for a public apology to those people who have been stopped from attending COP24, whose aims the Polish government says it upholds. Amends must also be made to those people who were banned from entering Poland and who, as a result, incurred costs and inconvenience in the wake of your ill-considered action.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum